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Helping Loved Ones Cope with the Death of Their Baby

Dealing with Grief
- Every parent expresses grief differently.
- There is no wrong way to express grief.
- Parents often share grief with the people that are closest to them.
- Respond to their grief with care and comfort.
- A parent may need extra support from a counselor, pastor, or support group.
- They may need grief support from a lot of different people.
- The father needs grief support as well as the mother.

You may feel helpless, worried, angry, cheated, confused or numb. You need to understand your own feelings about the baby's death to be able to support the parents. And there are things you can say or do to help them.

Things to Say:
- "I'm sorry for you loss."
- "This must be hard for you."
- "What can I do for you?"
- "I don't know what to say."
- "I'm here, and I want to listen."
- "I'm sad for you."
- "How are you doing with all of this?"
- "I can't imagine what you are going through."
- "I care about you and your family. What can I do to help?"

Things You Can Do:
- Sometimes it is best to be silent and simply listen.
- If the parents named the baby, call the baby by name.
- Offer to cook dinner, clean house, run errands, or take care of other children in the family.
- Attend the funeral or memorial service.

You may think you are being helpful, but some words are hurtful to parents suffering from a loss.

Some Things NOT to Say:
- "You'll get over it with time."
- "It was for the best."
- "It's better this way."
- "Count your blessings."
- "You have an angel in heaven.
- "You can always have another baby."
- "You're young. You can have others."
- "There must have been something wrong with the baby anyway."
- "Better for this to happen now, before you knew the baby."
- "At least you have other children."

Things NOT to do:
- Do not call the baby "fetus" or "it".
- Do not focus on yourself or your previous loss.

This information has been reviewed and recommended for use by the UAMS/CPED/Patient Education Advisory Committee.

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